

Developmental Milestones of Early Literacy

Research indicates that reading to a child promotes the process of language development. Pediatric providers are in a unique position to discuss with parents the importance of reading and talking to children to develop their foundation of language and literacy skills. Having books in the examination room allows the provider to model book sharing and comment on the child's response to the book, combining information about the child's emerging literacy with other developmental and behavioral issues.

	<u>Motor</u>	<u>Cognitive/Social</u>	<u>Talking with Parents About Books</u>
6–12 months	Reaches for book; book to mouth; sits in lap, head up steady	Looks at pictures, vocalizes, pats picture; prefers photos of faces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment while baby is looking at pictures. "She's really looking, moving her arms with excitement, and talking. Even infants love picture books." • "You can make story time part of your baby's routine, before bed or naps." • "You're teaching your baby that books feel good." • "Babies love rhymes and songs."
12–18 months	Holds book with help, turns pages, several at a time; sits without support, may carry book	No longer mouths right away; points at pictures with one finger; may make same sound for a particular picture (labels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "When you ask, 'What's that?' and name the pictures in a book, it teaches your baby that things have names." • "Once babies start to walk, trying to hold them on your lap can be a struggle. Some babies will want to be up and around during a story. That's OK." • "Offer stories each day, but let your child be in charge of how long you read." • "When your child grabs the book, he is showing a healthy drive for independence. He's not being bad."
18–36 months	Turns one page at a time, carries book around house	Names familiar pictures; attention highly variable; demands story over and over; reads books to dolls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "If your toddler listens to a story for five minutes, that's a long time. Stories are a good way to help toddlers increase their attention span." • "Sometimes you don't have to read what's actually written in the book. You can just talk about the pictures instead." • "Your toddler will want to pick the book, the time, and the person to do the reading. Let your toddler make choices within the limits of what's OK." • "Children learn by imitating. Does she ever read to her teddy bears or dolls?"
3 years and up	Holds book without help, turns normal thickness pages one at a time	Describes simple actions, can retell familiar story, plays at reading, moving finger from left to right, top to bottom, "writes" name (linear scribble)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "One way children learn to read is by hearing the same story over and over. It might be boring to you, but it isn't to her." • "Your child might want to tell you a story, and it may be a very different one from the one you thought you were reading! Each time he retells the story, he is practicing using language in a very important way." • "Play writing is the first step toward learning how to spell. Does she ever pretend to write or ask you to show her name?"